

# **NCLC 395 002 MEDITATION, MINDFULNESS, AND STRESS MANAGEMENT COURSE SYLLABUS – Fall 2015**

## **INSTRUCTOR**

Stacey Guenther – [sguenthe@gmu.edu](mailto:sguenthe@gmu.edu) - 703-501-5518 (texting is okay)

Meetings by appointment.

**CLASS MEETS** on **Fridays** from 10:30am-1:10pm in 215G Innovation Hall.

## **LEARNING COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

A growing body of research literature points to the benefits of mindfulness and meditation for mental and physical health. Although these terms are closely related, they are not identical. Mindfulness practice is one of many approaches to meditation; and mindfulness is applicable not just to meditation techniques but to a wide variety of daily life activities as well. These techniques assist us in combating what Rick Hanson calls the Negativity Bias: human beings' wiring for the fight or flight stress response. By using meditation, mindfulness, and other techniques, and by learning more about how to manage our stress responses, we increase our well-being and life satisfaction.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of modern research findings about mindfulness, meditation and mind-training, as well as some of the cross-cultural traditions related to these practices. (NCC Competency: Well-Being)
2. Describe and practice an approach to mindfulness and meditation that you design for yourself out of the various methods introduced in the course. Practice these techniques in community with other students. (NCC Competencies: Well-Being and Group Collaboration)
3. Write clearly about your own experiences with meditation, mindfulness, and stress. (NCC Competency: Communication)
4. Describe the ways in which mindfulness practice and mental imagery can have transformational impact on human health and well-being. (NCC Competency: Well-Being)

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Salzberg, Sharon (2011). *Real Happiness: the Power of Meditation*. New York: Workman Publishing Company. This book will guide us through a 28-day program to begin a meditation practice and will be the basis for the first four weeks of the course. If you buy a used copy, be sure it has the accompanying CD.

Sapolsky, Robert M. (2004). *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers: The Acclaimed Guide to Stress, Stress-Related Diseases, and Coping (third edition)*. New York: St. Martin's Press. This book covers the physiology, psychology, and interventions for stress.

**OPTIONAL:** Monaghan, Patricia and Eleanor G. Viereck (2011). *Meditation, the Complete Guide:*

*Techniques from East and West to Calm the Mind, Heal the Body, and Enrich the Spirit.* Novato, CA: New World Library. This book covers a wide variety of eastern and western meditation tradition, many of which we will explore both in and out of class.

Additional readings may be assigned for some current topics. They will be on Blackboard or the Web, or given to you as handouts.

## **BASIS FOR GRADING**

### **Participation (20% = 200 points)**

You and your fellow students benefit from your active participation in this safe learning community. Open discussion depends on the development of trust and safety among participants, as well as risk-taking and effective facilitation. It is, therefore, essential that class members attend all scheduled classes and participate in class discussions and activities. Discussions, questions, and small-group work, and hands-on creative projects will all contribute to the assessment of individual class participation. *Preparation outside of class significantly influences the quality of in-class participation.* For the 12 class sessions, you have the opportunity to earn 16.5 points per session by participating and contributing during the **full** class (12 x 15 = 130.) If you come late or leave early, points will be deducted.

An additional 20 points will be awarded by the instructor at the end of the semester for students who regularly make significant contributions each class clearly demonstrating their knowledge of readings and other homework and share their questions and understanding of the materials and practices.

### **Essay - Beginning a Meditation Practice (20% = 200 points)**

Major elements of the NCC curriculum and pedagogy are writing and reflective practice. You will be asked to write about your own experiences with meditation and mindfulness at the end of the Salzerg-guided 28-day meditation program. It is important to learn how to communicate a synthesis of inner, subjective experience alongside objective, critical thinking. A handout will be provided in class. Your paper will be due on **October 16**.

### **Retreat and Reflection (10% = 100 points)**

Attend the class retreat on **Sunday, October 25, on campus from 11am-5pm**. Most of the day will be spent in noble silence. We will prepare for the retreat in class. For any student who cannot attend the retreat due to personal reasons such as religious services, please contact the instructor prior to the second class on Friday, January 30, for an alternative retreat date. Following the retreat, you will complete an 800-1,000-word reflection sharing their experience. Reflection is due **October 30**.

### **Test and Worksheet on Stress Material (20% = 200 points)**

There will be a test consisting of multiple choice, true/false, and short and long essay questions on the material covered related to stress during the second half of the semester. The test is scheduled for **November 20**, and it is worth 150 points. Two weeks before the

test, you'll receive a test prep worksheet to complete. The worksheet will be due the class before the test, **November 13**, and will be worth 50 points.

### **Small "KM" Group (10% = 100 points)**

Students will be assigned to a small group, and on a weekly basis, you will meet, meditate together, and discuss your practice. The group will help students to create both accountability and support around their meditation practice. Because meditation cannot be just a theoretical activity, students must engage in the practice in order to truly learn about it. Going through the process of creating and maintaining a meditation practice can be a powerful shared experience when done in community with others. Meetings can be virtual, i.e. using Google Hangout or Skype, and must be an hour in length and not on Mondays when our class meets. At the end of the ten weeks, your team will submit a log detailing your meetings, which will be the basis for your grade. The log detailing your group's meetings will be due **November 13**.

### **Meditation Log (5% = 50 points)**

You will keep track of your meditation practice by recording each "sitting" on a meditation log, a form for which will be provided. During the four weeks we are focusing on *Real Happiness* and the meditation practice Salzberg presents, you'll aim for meditating as recommended in the book. Following the first four weeks, your assignment will be to meditate four times a week outside of class. Your grade for the meditation log will be based on the consistency with which you meditate and then record your experience in the log. Due **November 13**.

### **Self-Directed Exploration and Reflection (20% = 150 points)**

To deepen your learning and to experience a wide variety of practices, students will find and attend 5 hours worth of meditation, mindfulness, and stress mitigation experiences outside of class (mostly off campus). At the end of the semester, you'll recount all of the experiences through a reflection paper and provide artifacts from all of your experiences. A handout will be provided in class detailing the assignment, options, and basis for grading. Reflection and materials will be due the last class, **December 4**.

### **BASIS FOR GRADING SUMMARY**

Participation	20%
Small Group	10%
Essay on Meditation	20%
Retreat and Reflection	10%
Stress Test	20%
Self-Directed Exploration	15%
Meditation Log	5%

### **COURSE EVALUATION**

<b>A+</b> 995-1000+	<b>B+</b> 875-899	<b>C+</b> 775-799	<b>D</b> 600-699
<b>A</b> 925-994	<b>B</b> 825-874	<b>C</b> 725-774	<b>F</b> 0-599
<b>A-</b> 900-924	<b>B-</b> 800-824	<b>C-</b> 700-724	

### **EXTRA CREDIT**

Extra credit opportunities will be presented throughout the semester.

## CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY

New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty, and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- We believe that faculty, staff, and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking, and global understanding, aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION

### ***Learning Differences***

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Disability Resource Center. If you qualify for accommodation, the DRC staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor.

In addition to providing your professor with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with her at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Disability Resource Center and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell the instructor.

### ***Policy for Late and Missing Assignments***

You are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. All assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus and must be handed in on time. ***Late assignments may be marked down a full letter grade for each day late.***

### ***Format for the Assignments***

Unless otherwise noted by the instructor, all final writing assignments should be submitted electronically to [sguenthe@gmu.edu](mailto:sguenthe@gmu.edu). Please use file attachments and do not simply put your writing assignment into the text of the email. File attachments should be in a .doc, .docx or .rtf file format. ***Please include your last name in the file name***, plus any other identifier that will help you find the essay later on your computer. For example: *Thompson-silence.doc* might be the essay from a student with last name Thompson, which is on the topic of silence.

**All essays should include on the first page a title, your name, and course number.**

Accurate spelling, clarity, and correct use of grammar, and punctuation are expected and their absence can negatively affect your grade. Please note for each writing assignment if you are expected to write in a traditional academic style (i.e., when citing sources, you must correctly and consistently use a recognized citation style, either MLA or APA) or if the instructor has framed the writing assignment in a different way (e.g., "Imagine that you are writing an article for a general audience magazine readership").

You are responsible for keeping an electronic copy of all writing assignments that you submit for the course. Please save your work in multiple places. Backup copies can come in very handy sometimes!

### ***Student Support***

1. Disability Support Services (<http://ods.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2474; 222 SUB I). Assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will provide a form to give to your instructor.
2. Counseling Center (<http://caps.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2380; 364 SUB I). Provides individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues.
3. Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR) (<http://media.gmu.edu>; 703-993-8990; 229 Johnson Center). Provides support for web and multimedia design. STAR has video cameras and other equipment for student check out.
4. Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>; 703-993-1200; 114 Robinson A). Provides free tutors who can help you develop ideas and revise papers. Also available online.
5. On-line Writing Guide (<http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg>)

### **MAJOR DATES**

October 16	PAPER – Paper on meditation due.
<b>Sunday, October 25</b>	<b>SILENT RETREAT</b> – 11am-5pm (arrive no later than 10:45am)
October 30	RETREAT REFLECTION – Due.
November 13	STRESS WORKSHEET – Due in class. KM LOG and MEDITATION LOG due, send electronically.
November 20	TEST – On Stress
<b>November 27</b>	<b>NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>
December 4	SELF-DIRECTED EXPLORATION – Reflection, List, and Artifacts due. PAPER Re-writes due.
December 8	EXTRA CREDIT due TEST Re-writes due. No work will be accepted after this day.